

ANYTHING IN SMALL AMOUNTS

Proposal for a one-hour documentary

by Martin Duckworth

A look at two cultures, once enemies in the Cold War, now facing the same problem: how to deal with the social consequences of free enterprise? We will see how the problem affects a Canadian man and a Russian woman as they try to build a life together.

During the first investigate stage, enough Hi-8 material has been gathered to establish the main themes and characters. This is what the first 10 minutes might look like:

A cartoon artist is amusing the crowd as he draws a portrait of a client on some pedestrian mall. It is a clear but cold day. People are wearing modest winter coats.

Another crowd surrounds a very animated orator, with a thick beard. He is shouting in some incomprehensible language. Camera pans to a woman in her late twenties. She says, obviously to the camera operator: "He is denouncing bureaucracy. They don't want to change anything." The camera operator, a male, asks: "Is he funny?" She says: "Not funny. Sad."

Establishing shots of Moscow. We see a Canadian-owned Macdonald's restaurant, not too full. Business looks better at the stand-up tea counters in the pedestrian mall. It is called Arbat Street.

Another young orator, without beard, is reading from a text. You can discern rhythms and rhymes. He sounds angry. The young woman says: "He reads his poetry here because there is no possibility for him to publish." We see spectators handing 5-ruble notes to the poet in return for carbon copies of his poems. The young woman tells the poet that the man with the camera is in Moscow for the children's film festival of 1989, and asks him if he minds being filmed. The camera operator says: "Tell him I will show this video to my friends in Canada." Another young man says: "Oh, I like Canada. The people there are simple folk who love nature and concerts. Hippies are my favourite people."

Cut to a similar crowded mixture of young and older people in Jacques Cartier square, in Old Montreal. It is a sunny spring Saturday morning. Street musicians and beggars compete for attention. We see the provincial court house. Inside, a civil marriage is under way. We recognize the bride as the young woman who was interpreting for the Canadian film-maker in Moscow. We recognize the voice of the groom as that of the film-maker we heard behind the camera in Moscow. We learn that their names are Katerina Korolkevich and Michael Rubbo.

At the wedding party in their Outremont apartment, we learn that they also paint. The walls are full of Michael's landscapes in the style of Van Gogh, and the shelves hold some of Katerina's small icons and decorated eggs. A phone call comes from Moscow. Everybody listens as a tearful bride interprets her parents'

greetings and good wishes to all those present.

Cut to a sequence with Katie's parents in Moscow. Fred Korolkevich and Gretta Lanzetti are struggling to survive. He is a retired film producer who has at last turned full-time to his real passion, sub-quantum physics. Working only at home, he believes he has made new discoveries about the nature of light, and dreams of sharing his findings with fellow physicists at the University of California. Gretta is an actress who has not lost her dramatic flair, in spite of the increasing difficulty of finding work. Her sense of humour helps keep them afloat. She refers to herself and Fred as "Brigitte Bardot and Carlo Ponti".

We see them buying bread and bagels in a bakery called "Montrealski Chleb", looking at a window display of colourful dresses marked "made in Canada by Argo Tangerine", and walking by a 50 million-dollar office complex being built in Pushkin Square by La Groupe Lepine of Montreal. They stop and talk to the construction workers. Further down the street, we see women pecking through garbage cans, looking for dregs of food.

Homeless youth emerge from a night in an ancient storage space under Notre-Dame Street in Old Montreal. Single mothers line up for their weekly food parcels at Sun Youth on St. Urbain Street. Inside, director Sid Stevens is speaking: "We're faced with an epidemic of poverty. It's a hellish situation. 19 food banks and soup kitchens were robbed last year in Montreal." He is speaking

to Anna Saakian, a Russian immigrant. Trained in St. Petersburg as a civil engineer, she now operates a hair-dressing saloon in Westmount. Working in her spare time through the Russian Orthodox Church on Rene Levesque Boulevard, she has organized airlifts of clothes and food donated by her Jewish clients to the Church in St. Petersburg.

By arranging for Sid Stevens to meet Mrs. Yeltsin when she was in Montreal last year, Anna has persuaded him to help the Church establish a Canadian-style food bank in St. Petersburg, with donations from Canadian firms doing business in Russia. Stevens says: "We could send over clothes from Montreal. I'll try Bryant Bramson of Algo Tangerine clothes. We'd have to look for food over there. I'll try Maurice Doyon of Montrealski Chleb bakeries, and Ray Cohn at Macdonald's in Toronto. We'll find out which Canadian pharmaceutical companies are doing business over there."

Anna refers to a letter from the Deputy Mayor of St. Petersburg inviting Sun Youth to send a delegation over to discuss the idea, and adds: "Don't worry about the anarchy in the streets. My Church contacts there can arrange security for us with the help of the local mafia." Stevens: "I can get help from the Quebec government to send an investigative team over. But if it looks feasible to us, we should then train St. Petersburg workers on the premises here on how to set up a store front. Mrs. Yeltsin said to me that community to community contact would produce better results than government to government."

Cut to establishing shots of St. Petersburg, and to the modest home of Nikolai and Marina Egorov. They have five children, aged 2 to 17. We hear the voice of Katerina saying: "He is a writer and she is a painter. They found a note that we had put in a pair of pants that we had donated to Anna for one of her airlifts."

Cut to Michael and Katerina's kitchen in Outremont. An infant child can be seen asleep in a far corner. They are being visited by a Russian writer friend called Marina Sonkin. Katie continues: "They replied to our note, and we have written and talked on the phone with each other several times since." Michael: "Our note was like a bottle tossed in the sea. It's a tremendous thrill when you get a response." Katie: "But you have to be careful. You carry a responsibility when you raise people's hopes." Michael: "Raising hopes is what energizes people--makes life seem more possible, helps them achieve something." Marina: "After 70 years of Soviet rule, people become easily dependent on others." Michael: "But you can tell from their letters that they were energized. This is how the future is made--through millions of small contacts."

Katie brings in a file of letters and photos from their new friends in St. Petersburg. Marina notices a photograph of an ikon of Nicholas II, the last czar, and says: "pathetic, very bad." Michael: "Nikolai and Marina are monarchists. We're interested in old world people." Marina S.: "These are not old world people. Interest in the monarch is very recent in Russia. Czar Nikolai is sanctified because he was shot down cruelly. But modern

monarchists are not looking into history. You read the czar's diaries. They are pathetic. He described his little dog running around the lawn, while the revolution was going on. He was a petty man, and a bad czar. Thousands were killed because of him. There was a revolution because of him. Marina's icon of him is like an icon of Lenin. I don't want to see another idol like him in Russia." Michael: "Things are in a mess there. They are looking for some solid ground to stand on." Marina: "But you don't create an idol out of Mulroney because things are in a mess here. It's a dangerous thing to do. Reactionary forces rotate around it." Michael: "Anything in small amounts is harmless. I'd like to meet that family because I think they are very passionate people. They could help my comprehension of life."

Cut to Nikolai in St. Petersburg trying with no luck to get his phone to work so that he can get through to a publisher. Inter-cut with Bell Canada technicians installing a digital telecommunications network for the city. We see the Deputy Mayor getting through successfully to Sid Stevens in Montreal.

Cut to Gretta checking out one of the few surviving shows in Moscow. She has managed to get into the spectacular new arena of the Moscow Circus to watch twelve new recruits being trained by acrobats from Le Cirque du Soleil in Montreal. They two companies are preparing for a flying trapeze act they will be producing together in a world tour.